



The Tower

94th Year: Issue 5

Princeton High School
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

September 30, 2022

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

News & Features

2 PHS profile: Brent Ferguson

Opinions

3 The spread of misogyny at PHS

Vanguard

5 On American culture and its representations

Arts & Entertainment

7 Foliage and Film: two reviews of autumnal favorites

Sports

10 Meet unique athletes at PHS

NEW WING CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED

Hangyeol Cheong and Daniel Guo,
STAFF WRITERS

The past couple years have brought with them a number of major construction projects at PHS. Most recently, the construction of a new wing of the school has been the largest one. Now complete, the new wing contains new, furnished study halls aimed towards group work, offices for current gym teachers, and new facilities for PHS sports, which are all located in the area past the Tiger Cafe and above the weight room.

The 27 million dollar referendum which funded this expansion originally passed in December of 2018, including a ten million dollar plan for the construction of these new spaces along with upgrades to the school's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. Although there were changes in the supervision and leadership of the project, along with many delays, it was still able to be completed in time for this school year.

"After Principal Gary [Snyder] left, Principal [Jessica] Baxter was here for eighteen months, Jared Warren for six months, and then Mr. Chmiel took over last year. So the institutional knowledge of how things happen has been lost a little bit," said Matthew Bouldin, Business Administrator for the Princeton Public Schools. "It was very slow and it took two years plus for this particular addition, but the building was still built as intended."

The concept for this new space was first imagined after administrators saw the need for an open area, one where groups of students could freely interact and collaborate with each other, thereby fostering student growth.

"It's always supposed to be about the kids. And the thought was that the [Learning] Commons was always a popular place to study, but this is a place where you can do more collaborative things," said Bouldin. "As education improves, workplaces are different [and] we want to focus on that." Now that the expansion is complete, many students are enjoying the new environment; with large windows allowing natural light to fill the room, the area has a different aesthetic from the rest of the high school.

“Coming to work and having a new space is amazing. It raises the morale and makes you feel like, ‘Hey, we got a home again.’”



photo: Emily Qian

Students doing their homework in the new collaborative work area. Opening this year, this new wing also holds athletic facilities and flexible classroom spaces.

"I particularly like the really cool view in one of the rooms where you get a full view of the football field and tennis courts," said Beatrice Cai '23. "The whole vibe is very fresh and feels like a different building than the usual PHS."

Soon, the surrounding area will be filled with athletes as well. Until now, many PHS sports did not formally have a space to practice. The expansion hopes to solve that problem. Among the parts of the new wing are a dance studio, wrestling room, and fencing area.

Students are not the only ones able to benefit from the new wing though, as many gym teachers were able to relocate to newer, brighter offices. Before the construction, gym offices were located on the basement level right underneath the old gym. With no windows, and lights that barely worked, this created a gloomy environment to work in.

Lenny Goduto, a gym teacher at PHS, was pleasantly surprised by the renovations in the beginning of the year. He believes that the new gym offices that they contain bring a new type of unity to the Physical Education Department.

"As far as I know, coming to work and having a new space is amazing. It raises the morale and makes you feel like, 'Hey, we got a home again.' It just feels nice," said Gaduto. "It also allows the department to kind of come back together as a whole. Before we were kind of spread out in five or six different spaces the last two years."

Along with the new offices, Goduto also believes that the new wellness rooms, devoted to physical education, will yield a more positive teaching and learning experience to students and teachers alike.

"I think it's going to be incredible. We have a dance studio, we have a wrestling room, and a wellness lounge, which will all be used for physical education. I guess what it does is it opens up more teaching spaces and is more conducive for learning for you kids," Goduto said.

Overall, in the eyes of many people, this renovation has been quite a success. Looking into the future, Bouldin encourages students to voice their opinions about their needs from the school and the community in order to create a favorable environment for learning.

"What value do you place on education? There's a high value, of course, in Princeton placed on education. In the end, you guys are the ideas, you know, it's always supposed to be about the kids," Bouldin said. ■



photo: Emily Qian



photo: Emily Qian

(left) A new room on the second floor of the new wing which is dedicated to physical education and wellness. (right) Chairs and tables spread around a new adaptive classroom. Classrooms like these aim to provide more flexibility for both teachers and students.

PHS debuts lunch changes

Olivia Mao, NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITOR
Matthew Chen, STAFF WRITER

On the first day of school, while many students were trying to get back into the rhythm of school, they might have noticed one small change: lunch break was pushed up a period. On top of a changed schedule, the start of this year also marked the end of the free lunch program which ran through the majority of the 2021-2022 school year.

While these changes might seem minor, they were done to improve the quality of life while students are at school. The change in the lunch time is a result of the new schedule, which has only four classes in the morning as opposed to



Sophia Tsang '23 paying for lunch at the cafeteria. photo: Emily Qian

five. This schedule also extended the time between classes by a minute for more flexibility in crowded hallways with the tradeoff being the loss of a morning break.

"The idea behind the schedule change was to provide a more predictable schedule for the entire year. In a collection of surveys we gave [to staff and students], there were repeat comments about [fewer] schedule changes," said PHS Principal Frank Chmiel.

The timing of lunch, according to Chmiel, was not one of the reasons behind the schedule change. Instead, it was focused more on benefiting PHS students who take classes at Princeton University as well as those who attend the Mercer County Technical School.

While this may not be a drastic change, the earlier lunch has had a positive effect on some students.

"I like the new lunch because it splits up the day evenly between the eight classes. It took a second to get used to having four classes after lunch, but I think it works well because I always tend to be hungry by fourth period," said Otto Trueman '23.

Not all of the changes to lunch were positive though. The free school lunches, which were free during the pandemic due to New Jersey State funding, are no longer available. Students now need to pay for their school lunches.

"I think it would be great if lunch could be free again," said Trueman. "It's hard for a lot of students to bring their own lunch or buy it at school."

Despite lunch not being free for all students, free and reduced price lunches are always provided to students who qualify. The new lunch also brings back previously popular lunch options such as different types of fries.



Students line up during break to get their lunches, with the new school schedule pushing lunch forward a period. photo: Emily Qian

"I like the fries. I also like how the food is better prepared, and that we can pick out toppings at the deli," said Sophia Tsang '23.

In addition, the change allowed PHS to introduce a number of new options to the lunch menu. Thankfully, the new changes to the school lunch have so far been well-received by students.

"The new lunch is great! I love the options it has created for us as opposed to last year's lunch. It isn't free, so that is obviously a downside, but it sure keeps us fueled for the afternoon classes," said Jaiden Jain-Edwards '25. ■



Wouldn't a cookie taste good right now?

PRINCETON'S HOMETOWN COOKIE SHOP

real ingredients. freshly baked. nut free. downright yummy.

14 Chambers Street | 603.266.5437 | www.milkncookies.online

PHS Profile: Brent Ferguson promotes student engagement in the classroom

Peter Eaton, NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITOR
Kush Sharad, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For many teachers, starting their first year teaching at a new school is no simple task. Brent Ferguson though, currently teaching Calculus, AP Calculus AB, and AP Calculus BC, has already managed to set himself apart in just his first few days at the PHS.

Ferguson is no stranger to teaching, with this year marking his 30th year as an educator. When he first started as a teacher in 1993, Ferguson taught physics and chemistry at an all-boys school in Cleveland. Since then, Ferguson has taught at many schools including The Lawrenceville School, Princeton Day School, and Montgomery High School, before coming to PHS.

While he has grown to love the job over the years, Ferguson didn't always know that teaching was for him.

"I always had a hard time figuring out what I wanted to be when I grew up," said Ferguson. "I started tutoring officially in high school back in the 80s, you know, \$15 an hour. It felt like highway robbery to charge that much. But I feel like that was the beginning of my teaching career. I think I would have been fine to do a number of other things, but I think this is really what I'm called to do."

One defining part of Ferguson's journey in becoming a teacher was his time at graduate school at the Princeton Theological Seminary. Going into it, Ferguson felt the need to slow down and reevaluate where he wanted to go with the rest of his career, either continuing as a teacher or possibly assuming a leadership role in the church.

"During that time, I started to reframe why I was teaching. I kind of always just liked math, but I realized that the reason why teaching is so appealing to me is because you're helping people figure out who they are and who they are becoming and who they can be," Ferguson said.

Yuyi Liu '24, a student in Ferguson's AP Calculus BC class, appreciates Ferguson's love for teaching and the positive classroom environment that his devotion brings.



Ferguson explains the math concept of limits to his Calculus students. photo: Emily Qian

"I like how he's very good at guiding us into understanding the problem with hints and clues instead of rushing through the process and merely having us copy down notes. He emphasizes important parts of the lesson and really makes sure students comprehend the significant takeaways. His passion for math is very contagious, which creates an encouraging and engaging environment," Liu said.

Ferguson arranges his class in a way to ensure students can get the most possible out of their time in his class, emphasizing that student engagement is crucial for a complete learning experience.

"Getting students talking with the whole class and ... in small groups is super important. And I think that's a really important piece of mine," said Ferguson. "I think that the verbal description of math is what really leads to people owning their ideas and owning what they're doing, not just copying what a teacher did."

When students leave his classroom, Ferguson hopes they are more prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead of

them in both their academic and non-academic lives.

"There are a few things that I hope anyone who interacts with me but especially my students take away," said Ferguson. "That I love them no matter what, that I've got their back, and I will, without question, challenge them because the math is challenging. I'm not going to add to the challenges or pull away from them, but I'm definitely going to support students in finding ways that they can meet those challenges."

Vikas Yarlaggada '25, another student in Ferguson's AP Calculus BC class, appreciates his use of humor while teaching to prevent the creation of a tedious working environment.

"When he teaches, he can crack a joke or say something funny which really dials the class into what he is teaching," said Yarlaggada. "He's also still able to progress with the material because everyone then pays attention and understands quickly."

Outside of school, Ferguson enjoys spending time with his family and has many hobbies, including playing ultimate frisbee, doing jigsaw puzzles, and his latest interest: chopping wood.

"We have this great little fireplace insert, and we heat our home mostly by burning wood," said Ferguson. "We have a gas furnace, but we don't use it very much because we just love the smell and the kind of the caretaking quality of chopping, and managing and stoking the fire. It's just very satisfying."

In the end, Ferguson is grateful for the opportunity to teach at PHS.

"I'm really glad to be here. It feels like home to me, because this is the kind of school that I grew up in," said Ferguson. "I feel like I have a chance to be useful and give back." ■

OPINIONS

The spread of misogyny at PHS



graphic: Wenya Huan

Tamar Assayag, STAFF WRITER

While many of us Princetonians like to think that we live in an impenetrable progressive bubble, racist and misogynistic ideologies have already made many inroads into our community. One such inroad comes in the form of social media. “I think the woman belongs to the man” was one of many messages that Andrew Tate,

social media influencer, communicated to the world on a daily basis before being banned from most platforms. Tate garnered tens of millions of followers over the course of this summer, and many PHS students no doubt have heard of him, perhaps even subscribing to his ideals. The dangers of this kind of cyber-misogyny to our school and community cannot be understated.

To fight against online misogyny, it is first important to examine the effects of social media, especially with regard to one of its largest demographics: kids and teens. Within the span of even a ten to thirty second TikTok video, a child’s value system can be dramatically altered. Children and teenagers often idolize social media influencers without a second thought. In 2019, UNICEF and AEM conducted a survey showing that “When a child... sees something or someone on TV or the internet... the odds are high that the child will absorb everything unconditionally. Absorb and, most often, imitate.” Kids and teens are much more susceptible to trusting whatever they come across online, and unfortunately, this is also around the same age range that many kids start gaining access to social media platforms. What this creates is a situation in which influencers can easily weaponize social media to tout their ideologies to children, who are the most prone to being manipulated.

The summer of 2022 laid bare this threat, as Andrew Tate took the world by storm. His TikTok videos have amassed over 11 billion views on the app, and his name was searched on Google more than Donald Trump’s name was in July. From blaming assault victims to encouraging domestic abuse, from advancing homophobic views to glorifying the exploitation of women, from intentionally misgendering online figures to stating that “Females are the ultimate status symbol,” his messages are as varied as they are harmful. In fact, the only thing that does not seem to change about Tate’s eclectic posts is the unrelenting prejudice that underlines all of them. He has managed to introduce what are essentially Victorian gender roles and hierarchies back into the mainstream, warping the beliefs of millions of teenagers. Perhaps more than anything, he has shown that one man with a deeply twisted worldview and some semblance of charisma can fundamentally alter the views of a generation. Tate is not simply another social media nuisance to make fun of. Instead, he is a serious danger to social progress and to the safety of our community.

Thankfully, Tate has been ousted from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, though many of his misogynistic proverbs can still be heard recited unironically in school hallways. There is likely no redemption for Andrew Tate, but there still remains hope that we can learn from our mistakes in allowing someone like him to gain such traction at PHS and mend the damage that he has done. It is imperative that our school community does as much as it can to fight off this ongoing problem. Radicalization is remedied by open discussion. While social media may seem like a doorway to a wide range of opinions, recommendation algorithms quickly turn it into an echo chamber. Teachers should promote civil discourse in and out of the classroom, no matter how sensitive the issue. On social media, teenagers are already exposed to issues like sexual violence on the daily—Andrew Tate shouldn’t be the one mediating the conversation.

One article from 2018 by Harvard’s Making Caring Common Project suggests that teaching students how to critically consume media is an effective way to combat misogyny. English and history teachers especially must allocate more time to such exercises. Telling students “don’t trust everything on the internet” or “Wikipedia is bad” isn’t enough. Teachers should teach students how to research a topic: how to assess the bias of a paper, how to check the sources of a media pundit, how to choose articles from both sides of an issue. This doesn’t just undermine misogyny, it ingrains in students a healthy skepticism which is necessary in the internet age.

Moreover, students should take control of their own education. They should mediate their own conversations out of the classroom. They should try to learn about the issues which interest them, and share that information with their peers and classmates. Investing fully in this kind of leaning can help students build the critical thinking skills which are necessary to avoid falling prey to problematic views.

PHS does not tolerate any type of discrimination, but many of us see it online every day. As a community, our school should work towards preventing the misogyny and manipulation that we see on social media from having an effect on the student body. Words on a screen can sometimes translate to actions in real life, but cannot allow Andrew Tate’s ideology, to grip our community. Through civil discourse and education, we can hope to prevent that from happening. ■

We need to talk about class discussions

Jane Bennett, STAFF WRITER

Coming out of the pandemic, I had a rude awakening — the sheer act of raising my hand was now mortifying. Many other PHS students had grown accustomed to turning off their cameras and being anonymous in class. When we raised our hands for the first time out of a virtual classroom, we realized how much class attention was suddenly focused on us, and for most students, that attention was unwelcome. We all had to relearn how to actively participate. Even after a year of in-person learning, students are still hesitant to speak in class.

Teachers have made the classroom environment more comfortable by asking us for our pronouns and allowing us to choose our own seats, but most methods of encouraging participation are less accommodating, and can lead to the quietest among us not having their voices heard. Tactics like cold calling (calling on people at random) and strict participation grades are not working as intended. These strategies either do not work or cause class discussions to feel superficial rather than insightful. In order for each student to be represented in class, PHS must institute systematic change to class participation.

One of the main factors of participation anxiety is the discouraging responses that teachers give to students. Teachers say things like “you should have known this” or “did you even take notes?” when students make an error or ask a seemingly obvious question. Public humiliation discourages not just those unprepared, but everyone. Teachers should explain why a student’s answer is wrong and give

them a chance to correct themselves. Instead of calling students out for their errors and forcing them to invent half-baked contributions on the spot, teachers could allow students to talk in small groups and discuss their ideas with people they feel comfortable with as a sort of “warm up” before opening the conversation up to the entire class. Teachers could also ask more open-ended questions to allow students to bounce ideas off of one another instead of pressuring students with right or wrong answers. Class discussions shouldn’t entail going over the homework. They should be designed to expand on the ideas established by the homework, and let students ask their peers questions about these new concepts and insights.

Student participation can also be hindered by the responses of other students. Even if a student feels confident in their answer, the idea that it could be judged by peers or outright ignored can be all it takes to turn a raised hand into a lowered one. In order to solve this problem, teachers must make sure that students are being respectful of one another, no matter how absurd a postulation may seem to be. Teachers should reassure students that their ideas will not be judged, and will instead be used for others to gain a new perspective on the topic at hand. Encouraging some of the louder students to make room for people that aren’t usually heard, makes class discussions better.

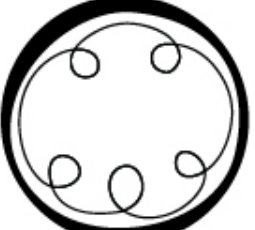
All PHS classes should make participation part of their final grade. Some teachers require every student in their classes to contribute at least once per period. Students who don’t participate are docked a full

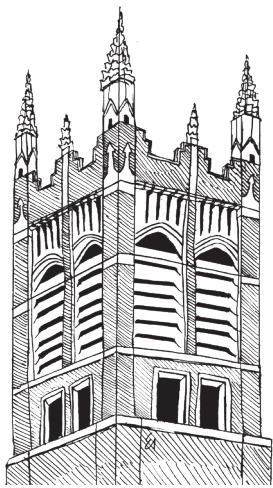


graphic: Mia Gatzke

percentage point for each day they don’t add something to the class conversation. Although this method can seem daunting for some students, it actually works brilliantly in terms of getting students out of their shells, and makes sure that a diverse array of opinions are presented every day.

Personally, class discussions are my favorite part of class. Last year in English, I was able to formulate the main idea of one of my essays thanks to our class discussion about “All Quiet on the Western Front.” Hearing the opinions of others and framing my ideas around their insights made me understand the subject material much better, and stimulated my curiosity about other things too! Not only do conversations like these provide new perspectives, but they also help students get to know others, which is especially vital now at the beginning of the school year.

LILLIPIES  BAKERY



Editorial

The necessity of world language classes

Walking down the 250s and 260s hallways at PHS, it's not unusual to hear the chatter of students conversing in Japanese, or the muffled rhythms of Malian pop music seeping through the walls. During the Mid-Autumn Festival, a holiday celebrated in varying forms in many Asian countries, the crumbs of mooncakes are scattered across classroom floors, and strands of auspicious symbols hang from the ceiling, swaying slightly every time students pass under them. In February or March, classroom doors are plastered with eclectic Mardi Gras decorations. These experiences reflect just a few of the festivities organized by our school's wonderfully rich world language program. Unfortunately, despite how fun and intellectually stimulating they can be, many students at PHS choose to deprioritize their world language classes. These classes are a window into the customs and vernacular of cultures around the globe, and are vital for any student who wants to have a nuanced view of the world around them. By only requiring one year of world language, our school is undervaluing the importance of cultural enrichment. It should be required for PHS students to take the full four years of their world language classes, and even rudimentary language courses should be valued just as much as every other class that a student might have on their plate.

Language connects people. It fosters solidarity and understanding. It is, at its heart, a mode of empathy. Language barriers, on the other hand, create categorization, alienation, even dehumanization. By increasing the fluency of the student body in languages other than English, PHS would make itself a more welcoming place, and its students more welcoming people. For students who do not speak fluent English, it would serve as a great comfort to know that there are others making an effort to speak their first language. Immigrants are often made to feel out of place in our country, and language barriers contribute to this problem. Many Americans travel to other countries

with the expectation that their people speak enough English to be able to communicate, and this is often true. But when a non-English speaker visits America, most Americans don't speak a lick of their language. Many non-anglophone countries choose to mandate the teaching of English in their schools. Why shouldn't schools in English-speaking countries mandate the teaching of other languages?

With the advent of the internet age, globalization is more of a reality than ever. With this new interconnectedness has come a new desire for uniformity, especially in regards to language. English has come to be known as the global standard for communication, and many governments have made efforts to replace traditional languages with English, such as India in 1835 when it passed the English Education Act. Lingual diversity acts as a conduit for cultural diversity. It is vital to the preservation of the history, heritage, and cultural identity of various regions around the world, which are all threatened by English's dominance. Within our country, it promotes the preservation of the culture and heritage of different immigrant groups.

By encouraging world language learning in our school, we can emphasize the importance of lingual diversity, and create an environment that is more inclusive of foreign cultures and people. Moreover, language classes are more than linguistics: they expose students to the rich and varied cultures of countries around the world. In French class at PHS and Princeton Middle School, for example, students can expect to learn everything from the intricacies of the Cajun cuisine in Louisiana, to the school schedules of students in Paris, to the gender inequities in Senegal. The school requires that we spend two years on every nook and cranny of American history and four reading exhaustive amounts of English texts. The school should push students to study other languages and cultures with just as much rigor. ■

How to disagree

Thomas Zhang and Alex Margulis, OPINIONS
CO-EDITORS

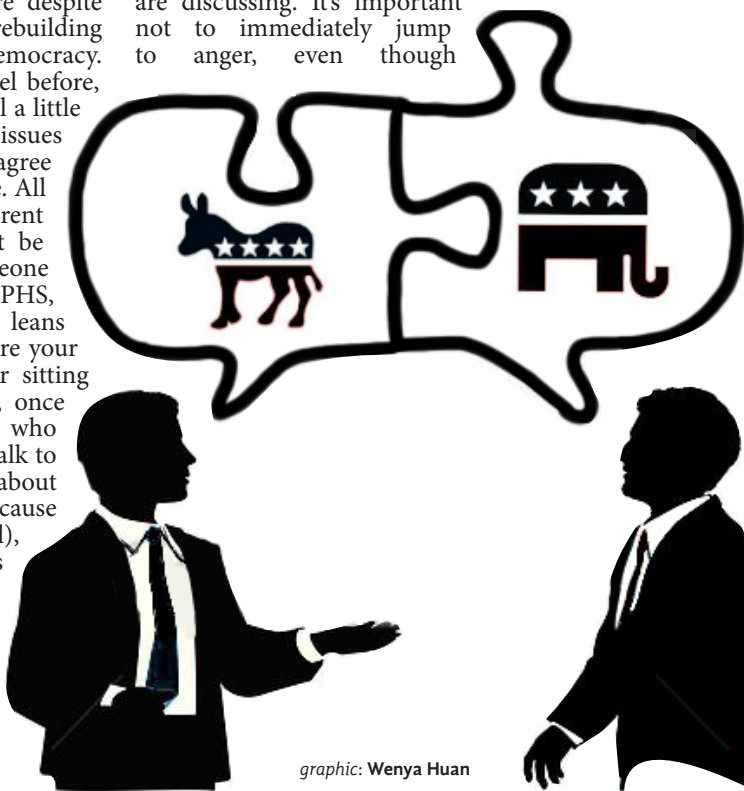
Most people tend to stick to friend groups where all the participants share similar political beliefs. It's much easier to be friends with someone if you're able to bring up politics without immediately wanting to yell at each other, but unfortunately, what's easy isn't always what's best for our high school community. Fostering discourse with people who have different political opinions than you is vital because politics becomes highly sectionalized and extremist when open lines of communication don't exist where Democrats, Republicans, and third-party supporters can all share their views. The Asper Institute supports this idea, explaining in 2018 that when you talk to people outside of your usual political spectrum, you both begin to care about each other more despite your political differences, a key first step in rebuilding our seemingly derelict American democracy.

Of course, you're probably heard this spiel before, but if you're like most Americans, you're still a little unsure of how to actually discuss political issues with people that you're sure you could never agree with. Thankfully, the process is pretty simple. All you have to do is find someone with different political beliefs than you, which shouldn't be too hard, as it's extremely unlikely that someone agrees with you about everything. Even at PHS, where it can seem like most of the school leans liberal, you can find students who don't share your policy priorities by joining a new club, or sitting with a new group of kids at lunch. Then, once you've found a new friend (or an old one who you want to start discussing politics with), talk to them! Your conversation doesn't have to be about politics at first (and probably shouldn't be, because you don't want to appear confrontational), but if you take the brave first steps towards shifting the conversation to that domain, there are a few things to keep in mind.

First of all, frame the talk you two are going to have as a discussion, rather than as an argument, and don't go into that

discussion hoping to "win." Every time two people have a conversation, they create a discursive space. Imagine that your space (which you can leave at any time) is valuable, and worth maintaining and protecting, and it's both of your jobs to make sure that sharing information and listening to each other's opinions is valued over just trampling over each other's viewpoints. You shouldn't prepare clever comebacks, or damning one-liners — as long as that discursive space is one where you can listen to your friend, and where both of you can take each others insights and use them for the better, it's a space worth being in.

It's also important to remember that your friend isn't wholly responsible for the political issue you two are discussing. It's important not to immediately jump to anger, even though



graphic: Wenya Huan

The Tower

Princeton High School
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey

© 2022 Staff of the Tower

Editors-in-Chief Christopher Bao, Julie Liu
Managing Editor Cherie Sun
News & Features Editors Peter Eaton, Olivia Mao
News & Features Staff Hangyeol Cheong, Daniel Guo, Matthew Chen
Opinions Editors Alexander Margulis, Thomas Zhang
Opinions Staff Sarah Jane Bennett, Tamar Assayag
Vanguard Editors Sophie Miller, Andrew Zhao
Vanguard Staff Freya Patel, Kristina Sarkisova
Arts & Entertainment Editors Shumona Bhattacharjya, Rida Mian
Arts & Entertainment Staff Sky Jo, Marina Peres
Sports Editors Jessica Chen, Frankie Gamio
Sports Staff Dester Selby-Salazar
Visuals Editors Wenya Huan, Emily Qian, Lydia Madamopolou
Visuals Staff Angela Wu
Head Copy Editors Holly Christiansen, Sophie Feldman
Copy Staff Eve Bertrand, Eli Lebeau
Business Managers Ron Mishra, Debolina Sen
Online Editors Bella Cui, Luke Tong
Advisors Lauren King, Doug Levandowski

Mission Statement

The Tower serves as a medium of information for the community through reporting and/or analyzing the inner workings of Princeton High School, the school district, and cultural and athletic events that affect the student body; providing a source of general news for parents, teachers, and peers; voicing various opinions from an informed group of writers; and maintaining quality in accurate content and appealing aesthetics, as well as upholding professionalism and journalistic integrity.

Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Tower consists of a select group of 13 Tower 2022 staff members. The views of board members are accurately reflected in the editorial, which is co-written each month by the Board, with primary authorship changing monthly.

Letter and Submission Policy

All letters and articles are welcome for consideration. Please e-mail all submissions to phtowersenioreditors@gmail.com. The editors reserve the rights to alter letters for length and to edit articles. The Editor-in-Chief takes full responsibility for the content of this paper.

The Tower Online

The Tower is available to read online at www.towerphs.com.

The newspaper accepts advice from the administration and the advisors in regard to the newspaper's content; however, the final decision to print the content lies with the Editors-in-Chief. The Tower's articles do not necessarily represent the views of the administration, faculty, or staff.

The Tower editorial is written in part by Peter Eaton, who is the son of Board of Education member Beth Behrend.

almost every issue you two will discuss probably has real world implications that could end up hurting people both of you care about. You two are not the arbiters of which policies are actually passed, but by communicating calmly about the policies that are up for discussion, you can have a productive conversation that makes it more likely a solution you can both agree upon can come into being.

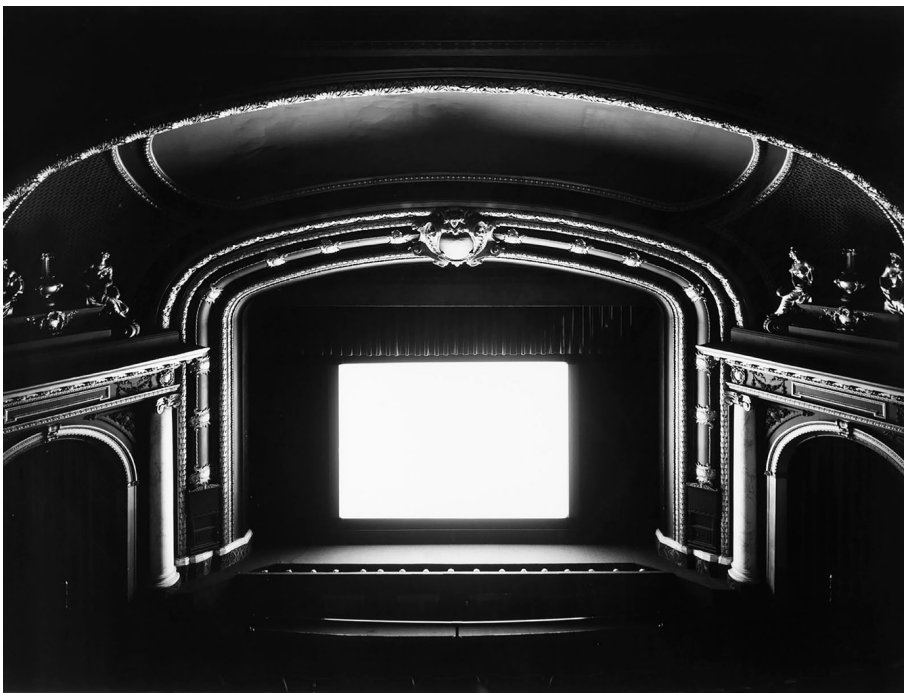
There are times where it's better for you to unceremoniously exit a conversation, rather than trying to keep it going against your better judgment. If your friend says something blatantly racist, sexist, homophobic, or similarly problematic, it's okay to step out of the discussion. You shouldn't feel like you have to bear deeply hurtful comments just to have a conversation with a classmate, and it might be smart to get a teacher or administrator involved. Additionally, if either of you get heated enough over a political issue to just start throwing personal attacks at each other, you can and should just leave the conversation.

You should treat the conversation you two will have as an almost academic one. Recognize that your friend, no matter how outlandish their opinion may seem to be, probably has plenty of valid information to share with you. Listen to what they say, instead of nodding along while secretly preparing for a witty retort. If you are not familiar with a topic, then say so! If you have nothing to really share about something, it's probably not a topic worth spending time on. Move on, find where your opinions clash, and discuss that issue together.

It's likely that neither of you will have changed each other's opinions by the end of your conversation. That's okay. What you will have done is created a space where you can understand and communicate with each other better, both during the conversation and in the future. That is the single most important first step towards rebuilding connections within our fractured political sector, and it is something that we should all strive towards, if democracy is something we value in this country. ■

Awaken to Art

Discover our two downtown galleries while we build a new Museum for Princeton.



Time's Relentless Melt

August 20–November 6

Explore how art can mourn, chronicle, or celebrate the passage of time.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

ART *ON* HULFISH



Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks

September 24–November 27

One artist navigates the seas of the climate crisis.

ART @ BAINBRIDGE

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

The exhibitions and programs at Art on Hulfish and Art@Bainbridge are made possible by Annette Merle-Smith, Princeton University, William S. Fisher, Class of 1979, and Sakurako Fisher; J. Bryan King, Class of 1993; Rachelle Belfer Malkin, Class of 1986, and Anthony E. Malkin, and other generous benefactors. *Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks* is organized by Guild Hall of East Hampton and presented by the Princeton University Art Museum.

LEFT: Hiroshi Sugimoto 杉本博司, *Imperial, Montreal*, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York. © Hiroshi Sugimoto
RIGHT: Alexis Rockman, *Steller's Sea Cow*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York. © Alexis Rockman. Photo: Adam Reich

Vanguard explores culture

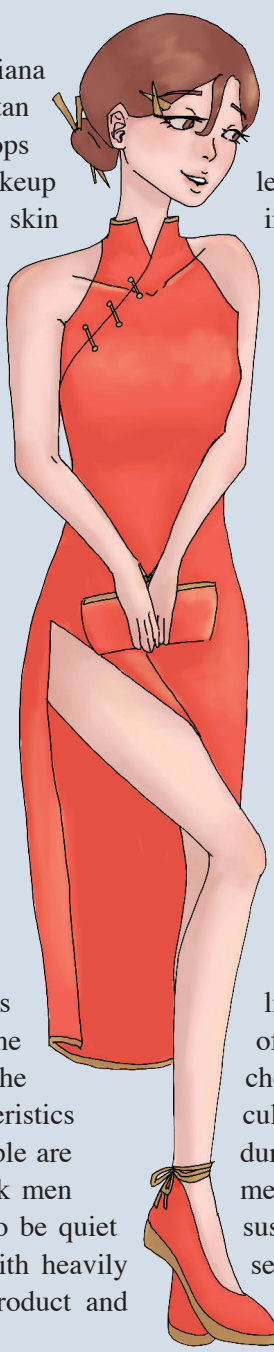
Cultural fetishization: how it developed and how it contributes to racism

Kristina Sarkisova, STAFF WRITER

A video of the critically acclaimed singer-songwriter Ariana Grande blows up. You see the celebrity sporting a dark spray tan and utilizing AAVE. However, a few months later, Ariana pops up on your feed again; this time she has a new look. Her makeup is done in a way that gives her eyes an upswept effect, her skin intently paler, mimicking some common physical traits of Asian people. This shape shifting raises the question of what authority she has to be taking from various cultures. Ariana Grande exploits existing racial stereotypes to present herself as different ethnicities, and gets away with it due to her racial ambiguity. Despite all of this, behind her multiple costumes of cultural appropriation, Ariana Grande is just a Caucasian woman of Italian descent.

This example just serves as the beginning of delving into the effects of cultural fetishization. Janice Gassam Asare for Forbes in 2021 defined fetishization as “the act of making someone an object of sexual desire based on some aspect of their identity.” Actions like Grande’s influence a widespread occurrence of fetishization. Celebrities know that if they “play into” the stereotypes of a race that is fetishized, they will be seen as more attractive, hence maintaining their relevancy and earning more money. They take advantage of the harmful fetishization that exists simply in order to stay under the spotlight.

Beyond media, cultural fetishization of Black, Asian, and Latinx cultures is ubiquitous and not limited to one gender. At its roots, cultural and racial fetishization centers a person’s race as the most appealing trait about them. It is when someone is attracted to a person solely (or at least in large part) for the reason that they expect them to fit into a certain box of characteristics based on their race. Some examples include when Latinx people are complimented on being foreign or exotic, viewing both Black men and women as hypermasculine, or expecting Asian women to be quiet and suppressed, as if to resemble a porcelain doll. Along with heavily dehumanizing individuals, cultural fetishization is both a product and contributor to racism as it reinforces and spreads prejudices.



graphic: Angela Wu

Fetishization of certain cultures have their own roots and causes. More specifically, Asian women have been objectified for centuries. Fetishization of Asian women increased as America started leading wars in Asian countries like Vietnam and the Philippines in the twentieth century. Author Celine Parreñas Shimizu in an interview for Vox in 2021 relates Asian women as being seen as sex objects to the various wars during which a plethora of Asian women were enslaved into prostitution for American soldiers. This sparked the rise of media that included the trope of an American man meeting a young Asian woman. Being simultaneously hypersexualized and portrayed as submissive and fragile, Asian women were and are fetishized.

Fetishization of Black and Latinx people mostly developed from European colonization in America. White colonizers already entered the land viewing anyone who did not match their skin tone as inferior, objectifying every other race. This initial dehumanization then branched into sexualization. A 2016 study on the colonial roots of fetishization by Caren M. Holmes illustrates how the only value society gave enslaved Black women in America was producing more enslaved children. The image of a Black woman that is overtly sexual and promiscuous formed this stereotype. All of these events in combination have led society to where it is today, one that has not done enough to eliminate the painful roots of racism and fetishization.

The effects of cultural fetishization in the past have led people living in modern society to suffer. Although not always the case, oftentimes what people establish as just a “preference” like only choosing to date a certain race due to physical traits is linked to cultural fetishization. These developments start to come to fruition during adolescence and are even more influenced by the surrounding media that further distorts our perceptions. It is so simple to become susceptible and start fetishizing without even registering it, let alone see the reasonings that led to these actions. It’s important to remain conscientious of our actions in today’s society to help end the harmful generational cycle of fetishization. ■

American culture and its representations

Diane Buffet-Mogel, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I’ve heard my non-American family members say “America has no culture” so many times that the absurdity of the statement no longer shocks me. They’ll watch Hollywood movies, listen to songs recorded in New York or Chicago, and visit museums featuring distinctly American art and never once consider that American culture is as real as any other. Instead, imagining a portrait of American culture defined only by consumerism and outrageous news headlines, they say confidently, and with sincerity, that America has no culture. As an American, then, I should have an easy time building a rebuttal to such an obviously incorrect claim, right?

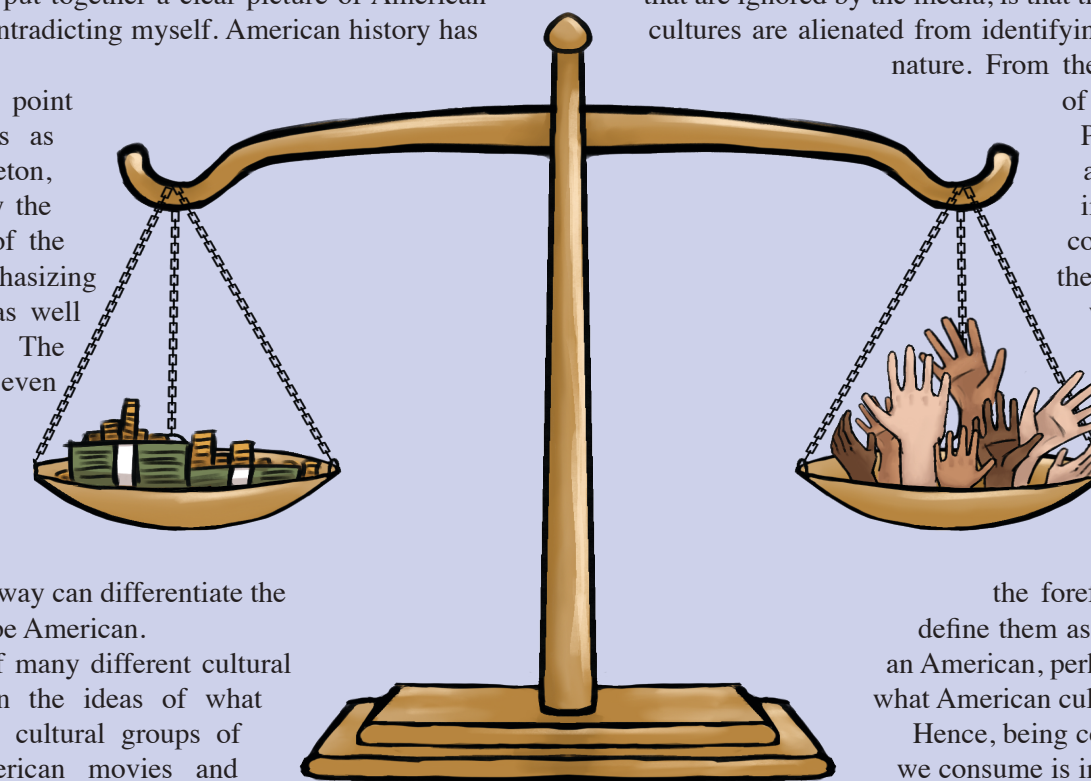
When I look at the aforementioned media, I certainly see representations of American culture, but I can’t put together a clear picture of American culture without at some point contradicting myself. American history has shaped the many regions of America differently to the point where each could almost pass as a different country. At Princeton, our culture is heavily shaped by the fact that we live next to one of the world’s top universities, emphasizing worldliness, achievement, and as well as elitism in our community. The culture of Princeton doesn’t even entirely resemble the culture of New Jersey as a whole, let alone the United States. In this way, America encompasses a plurality of cultures, to the point where living mere blocks away can differentiate the experiences of what it means to be American.

While representations exist of many different cultural communities of America, often the ideas of what counts belong to the dominant cultural groups of the country. Mainstream American movies and television generally paint American culture as suburban, wealthy or at least upper-middle class, white, anglophone, and Christian; elements which all work to cement the idea to both domestic and global audiences that those elements comprise a standard of American culture. Writers, directors, and producers of American media often come from backgrounds in which connections and resources are maintained in the hands of those with capital, who themselves often come from privileged backgrounds due to the systemic racial and economic barriers in the industry. This cycle prevents the many true stories of American culture from permeating the mainstream. Moreover, when stories are brought to these gatekeepers of the American media diet, they are often rejected on the basis of general marketability or financial risk in favor of what already maintains a large appeal among consumers. Ironically, the proposals that are often accepted by such industries are ones that are already seen on the

daily, implying that they wouldn’t attract a new audience or entertain one that has seen the same stories. Consumerist culture is cultivated by major studios, hindering the ability of underrepresented American cultures to enter the mainstream. Therefore, there may be many who have distinctly American identities but are often not recognized. By extension, it is hard to determine what a truly American identity even suggests. Instead, the general population, including Americans, may be led to believe that American culture consists only of the dominant culture, rather than the diverse groups which create the mélange of American culture.

The trouble with this, other than the hundreds and hundreds of stories that are ignored by the media, is that the underrepresented American cultures are alienated from identifying themselves as American in nature. From the Hispanic-influenced culture of Southern Florida to the large Polish community in Chicago and hundreds of pockets of immigrant cultures around the country that have synthesized their traditional cultural roots with that of their new home, American identities are present everywhere except in mainstream media. If America could bring both domestic and global representations of these American cultures to the forefront and celebrate them and define them as a part of what it means to be an American, perhaps the misunderstandings of what American culture is can be resolved.

Hence, being conscientious of the media that we consume is imperative to defining our own identities and representing ourselves through the country. Students all over the country, or at least those who honestly complete their English homework, consume American stories which represent a greater diversity than those represented in mainstream American media. Although changes must be made at the structural level, students can still seek out more diverse media which may expose them to a great variety of American stories. More than just for enjoyment, which a greater variety of stories will provide by novelty alone, these stories can teach students to interact more thoughtfully with questions about American identity, culture, and politics. For the students who wish to break into the world of storytelling, their creativity will be enriched by a greater understanding of the country in which they may choose to write about. Creating a world that, rather than reflecting the same sort of life we’ve seen on screens, is unique to ourselves and our identity. ■



graphic: Angela Wu

Club leaders on diversity

Compiled by Sophie Miller, VANGUARD CO-EDITOR



photo: Lydia Madamopolou

Why did you decide to lead your club and why is it important to you?

“I knew I wanted to create a welcoming space for people from our community to celebrate our culture through music, food, and dance. Being Latina is a huge part of my life, and leading Latinos Unidos has pushed me to embrace my heritage outside of our meetings. We are more than just a club, we are truly a familia.”

-Jealyn Vega '23, Latinos Unidos

Why is your club important for helping PHS celebrate diversity?

“Our club is focused on cultural and racial equality, therefore we strive to create a club and school where all identities are not only accepted, but supported. By providing a safe space for all students to share their stories, we hope to educate students at PHS and make everyone feel welcome. Often, we will have meetings about holidays as these are an important part of many cultures. By bringing attention to lesser-known holidays, we hope to make PHS students more respectful of people celebrating.”

-Vivian Clayton '24, C.A.R.E



photo: Wenya Huan

What are initiatives your club takes to celebrate diversity?

“Every year, we host Asian Fest, a festival where all the PHS Asian clubs like our club, Chinese Club, and Bollywood Club all come together to teach other students more about Asian culture. Last year, Bollywood Club and K-Pop Club did a dance performance and a fashion show. We also supported the Stop AAPI Hate movement. A lot of members spoke out over social media and went to the march in Princeton as a group.”

-Michelle Peng '23, Asian American Club



Photo credit: Lydia Madamopolou

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PHS musicians amplify sense of community at spirit events

Sarah Kaputa and Sophie Zhang, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



photo: Emily Wu



photo: Rida Mian



photo: Emily Wu



photo: Rida Mian

Top left: (from left to right) Ishaan Banerjee '24, Anika Simons '23, Nina Esteghamat '23, Andy Yin '24, Helen Tung '24, and Abby Diamond '23 rehearse for their Homecoming performance. Top right: (from left to right) Matty Baglio '23, Otto Trueman '23, Mari Paredes '23, Emil Hansen '23, Dani Franke '23, Phineas Collins '25, Rica Eleches-Lipsitz '25, Aeshna Ware-Huff '23, Noa Zacks '25, and Andre Penn '23 sing at Around 8 rehearsals. Bottom left: (back row, from left to right) Connor Stewart '23, Jude Blaser '23, (front row, from left to right) Max Dunlap '24, Sara Carson '23, and Matt Chen '25 practice at Studio Band rehearsal. Bottom right (from left to right): Isabel Wong '23, Heidi Engelbert '24, Rowan Gilmore '23, Vivian Clayton '24, Raima Srivastava '25, Ashley Chen '23, Jenna Stucky '25, and Maya Halcomb '25 rehearse for the Cat's Meow's performance at the Pep Rally.

Fueled by the excitement of returning to a normal school year, PHS students are roaring with school spirit. With the start of the fall sport season and the recent “pack the cage” mentality that many have adopted, sporting events have offered students an opportunity to show support for their peers and display school pride. Of course, these events would not be complete without the captivating musical acts that entertain the crowd, so there is no shortage of work for PHS musicians to do in preparation.

This September, two major school spirit events took place, both of which occurred on Friday, September 23: the annual Pep Rally and the Homecoming game.

The Pep Rally occurs every year in September and gives the student body a chance to recognize and uplift our sports teams. Each team is individually called out, after which they are met with a round of applause from their peers. This event is purposefully held before Homecoming to amp up school spirit before the big game, and the inclusion of musical entertainment is integral to keeping the crowd engaged and excited. This year, the Pep Rally took place after school on the turf, where two of PHS's a cappella groups—The Cat's Meow and Around 8—performed. As school has just started, there was little time to prepare for the gig, but the young musicians were confident that they would pull through with a good performance despite the time crunch.

“The easiest part of practice is that we have so many great singers, that learning music has become a piece of cake. We can put together a new song every rehearsal,” said Matty Baglio '23, the music director for Around 8.

Around 8 performed the national anthem for the Pep Rally, while The Cat's Meow performed the PHS alma mater.

“We're excited to be performing the alma mater this year. It's nice to be part of such a fun tradition that's so important to PHS culture,” said Rowan Gilmore '23, a singer in The Cat's Meow.

The highly anticipated PHS annual Homecoming game took place later that day at 7:00 pm. Every year, students excitedly show up to the first home football game of the year to show off school spirit, enjoy a night of fun, and support our student athletes. Just as exciting is the halftime performance, which starred the PHS Studio Band. For

the few weeks leading up to the performance, Studio Band musicians worked hard to make this year's performance even more sensational than last year's.

Since the Homecoming game was moved up a month this year, Studio Band members were also under a time crunch to rehearse.

“We [were] just starting to prepare so the difference this year is that we have less time. We [had] like two and a half weeks to pull this together. I would say it's more frantic this year,” said Band Director Joseph Bongiovi.

Despite the ticking clock, younger students were looking forward to performing in the classic halftime show.

“I [was] most excited to be playing in front of my classmates and other friends because I love to play in front of people I know... I know [people] will listen to what we are playing and really enjoy it,” said drummer Owen Barry '25.

After only a few weeks of practice, Studio Band was already beginning to collaborate and merge their sounds—the rhythm section in particular meshed very quickly.

“I mean the rhythm section sounds great—it's our piano, bass, drums—and the trumpets sound good this year too,” Bongiovi said.

Past performances have included hits like “Treasure” by Bruno Mars and Stevie Wonder's “Sir Duke.” Before their performance, Studio Band's production was under wraps, so the set list was kept secret between its members.

As it turned out, the setlist for the concert was particularly engaging for the audience. Studio Band ended up dazzling the crowd with their renditions of “September” by Earth Wind and Fire, “Runaway Baby” by Bruno Mars, “Lose Yourself” by Eminem (rapped flawlessly by Koen Moulton '23), “Smells Like Teen Spirit” by Nirvana, and “Proud Mary” by Tina Turner. “Smells Like Teen Spirit” was particularly well received by the audience after a surprise solo by PHS Principal Frank Chmiel.

Overall, though there was limited time to rehearse, PHS musicians pulled through with a well-done performance. Despite the football team's loss, the engaging musical performances and sense of community instilled the sense of school spirit that Homecoming is all about. ■

PHS student experiences at summer concerts

Sky Jo, STAFF WRITER and Dia Beri, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



photo: Sungjun Jo

“I went to see the Rex Orange County with my friend Kathy. Rex Orange County is a new artist I started listening to, so seeing him in real life was a fun experience. Throughout the concert, there was an amazing production with the lights, floating balls, sound, and of course, Rex.” - Blake Jung '24



photo: Sophie Zhang

“On July 9, I went to Tomorrow X Together's concert. I've been to a couple concerts in the past (Taylor Swift and Twice — who were both amazing) and TXT definitely exceeded expectations! I'm so glad I could see them because they mostly perform in Korea.” - Jacqueline Zang '25



photo: Marina Peres

“This summer I went to Gov Ball with my friends where I got to see my favorite artist Playboi Carti. This was my second year at Gov Ball, and just like last year, Carti's performance was outstanding. The energy in the crowd was so amazing, and I loved how it was outdoors, and his overall setup was really cool.” - Tatiana Hadzic '25



photo: Hayah Mian

“I went to the Harry Styles concert this summer on August 20 and the Phoebe Bridgers concert on June 16. They were both an amazing experience and I missed seeing my favorite artists live.”

- Ruhee Hedge '25

Ashley Chen '23 recounts her musical journey

Sara Shahab Diaz, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ashley Chen '23 has been passionate about singing and songwriting since childhood. She initially became interested in jazz back in middle school, when her band teacher encouraged her to audition for Jazz Band, and she has pursued it ever since. She has been singing with the PHS Studio Band since her freshman year, and with The Cat's Meow since her sophomore year. Chen has found her community through music, and

has formed many close relationships with her fellow musicians. In her freshman and junior year, she won Outstanding Soloist for Studio Vocals. Studio Vocals also won first place at National Jazz Festival in her sophomore and junior years, and they won second place at states her junior year as well. Overall, Chen has found community and success through her passion as a musician.

What experience has shaped your passion for singing?

I remember that when I was a freshman, I got to see seniors do vocals for Studio Band, and that's what got me to really love singing and want to be good at it. I saw them win awards and be crazy, and it really prompted me to want to be like them. I remember the Princeton Jazz Festival when I was in middle school and watching the seniors at that time perform was what made me realize: "I want to do this when I'm older."

What opportunities has singing opened up for you?

It's opened up a lot of opportunities. I got to perform at major jazz festivals in Europe for this summer band I sang in, which were really cool. I've also been able to compete at the national Jazz Fest and go to states. There are a lot of things that I wouldn't have done if I hadn't gone into band like the opportunity to win awards.

What is the most important lesson singing has taught you?

I think perseverance, because when I was a freshman I was definitely not at the level I am now. It took time, maturity, and practice, and the determination and perseverance it took to get me here is the biggest thing I've learned.

What challenges have you faced or have had to overcome when it comes to singing?

In the beginning, it was stage fright and learning how to get over stage presence because that's something you can't really learn right off the bat; it took a lot of experience. I think the initial awkwardness, not knowing what to do, and that fear were tough to get over.

When did you first start singing and who first got you into singing?

I've always loved singing ever since I was really young, but I think I got into singing for jazz and for bands right now. In middle school, there were Jazz Band auditions, and Mr. Pollack told me to do it, and that's how I got into it. I used to think I'd be more of a musical theater person, but now I'm in band because of that.

Is there any artist or song you take inspiration from?

I really love this artist, Laufey, because she sings jazz and the standards that I do as well, but she also writes jazz pop and contemporary music for newer generations. I take inspiration from her because of the fact that she's introducing this old genre to the newer generation.

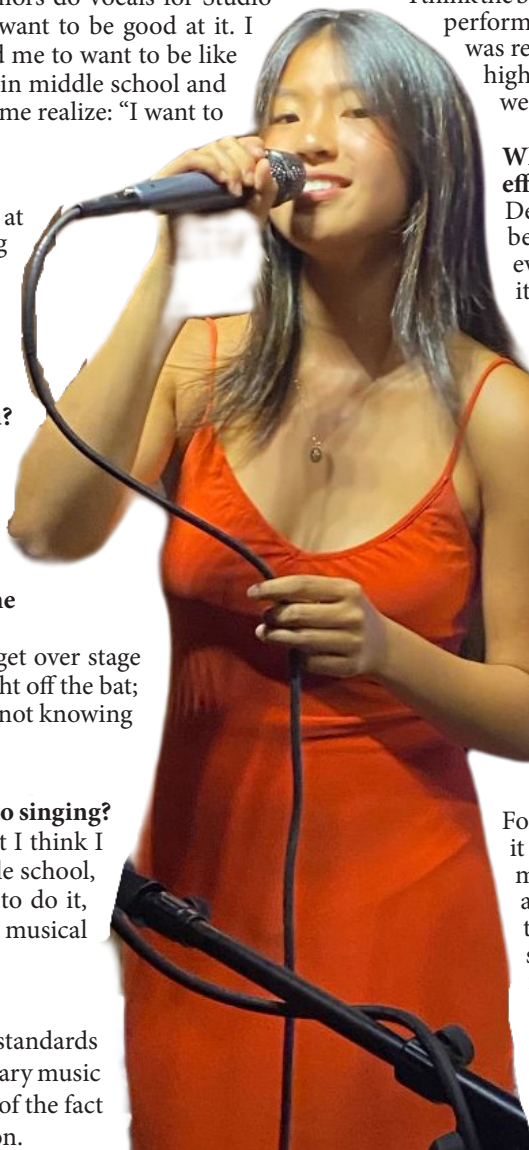


photo courtesy: Ashley Chen

What do you consider to be your best performance so far?

I think the best performance I've done was for the National Jazz Fest. It was a recorder performance, and I won first for the vocal category. That was something that I was really proud of because I did that every year, and I've never gotten that high of a ranking, so I'd say that's my best performance. For Cat's Meow, we do a lot of gigs, and I think every gig's pretty good.

What skills have you gained by singing that have helped you perform effectively?

Definitely a lot of confidence. It takes a lot of confidence to get out there because everyone's looking at you and you're just standing there, while everyone else in band is sitting. Physically, I've gained breath support, and it's good for tennis too, which I play, so the physical endurance is good.

Where do you see your singing career in ten years?

Probably singing with my friends at different places if we wanted to. I wouldn't say a big venue because I don't know if I want to pursue that kind of career, but doing gigs with my friends and finding places to perform would be cool.

How have the people in band shaped your life?

They've definitely shaped my life a lot. You get so much support from people, especially for activities like singing and music, which not all my friends are involved in. So having friends who are in it, too, we all support each other as we get better. Sharing similar experiences ... and having people do something you all love together [is what makes band] a good community.

What's the difference between your experience in Band and your experience in The Cat's Meow right now?

For Cat's Meow, we have nine people, so we're very tight knit, and I love it because we're kind of a family. We do a lot of things together and we meet every week. It's a smaller group and we have both underclassmen and seniors, so it's like we're taking care of the underclassmen. Last year the seniors were taking care of me as the underclassmen in the group, so it's a really tight family. Band is obviously bigger, definitely still a family, but more of a larger community.

What is the best part about singing?

The best part is putting together the final pieces for everyone. After rehearsing so hard, going on stage with the final piece and seeing what you worked really hard for and rehearsed for come to life is probably the best thing.

autumn word search

- SCHOOL
- LEAVES
- HALLOWEEN
- PUMPKINS
- RED
- SWEATER
- BREEZE
- YELLOW
- BROWN
- WEATHER
- THANKSGIVING
- APPLES
- ORANGE

U U A H Y S G Y G B Y M Q D J
 Y G P D S T W K L L E I K S F
 H J P F D R P E E S U Q G O W
 M B L G Q E Z U A A C X Y O D
 L R E H P D P L M T H H A R Y
 A E S F A E B U E P E W O N E
 O E H A R L I R A A K R C O L
 R Z R H C J L P O D V I S Y L
 A E W B E Q I O V W R E N P O
 N Y E G M J V J W G N J S S W
 G Z A F U X T X G E D O O S O
 E F T F W Y X S O O E F V J U
 A T H A N K S G I V I N G P G
 T O E Q R K M R T G Q O N V Q
 V B R N O K K I K K E K Q N F

graphic: Lydia Madamopoulos

graphic: Mia Gatzke

Foliage and film: autumnal favorites to enjoy with your cider



“You’ve Got Mail” film review

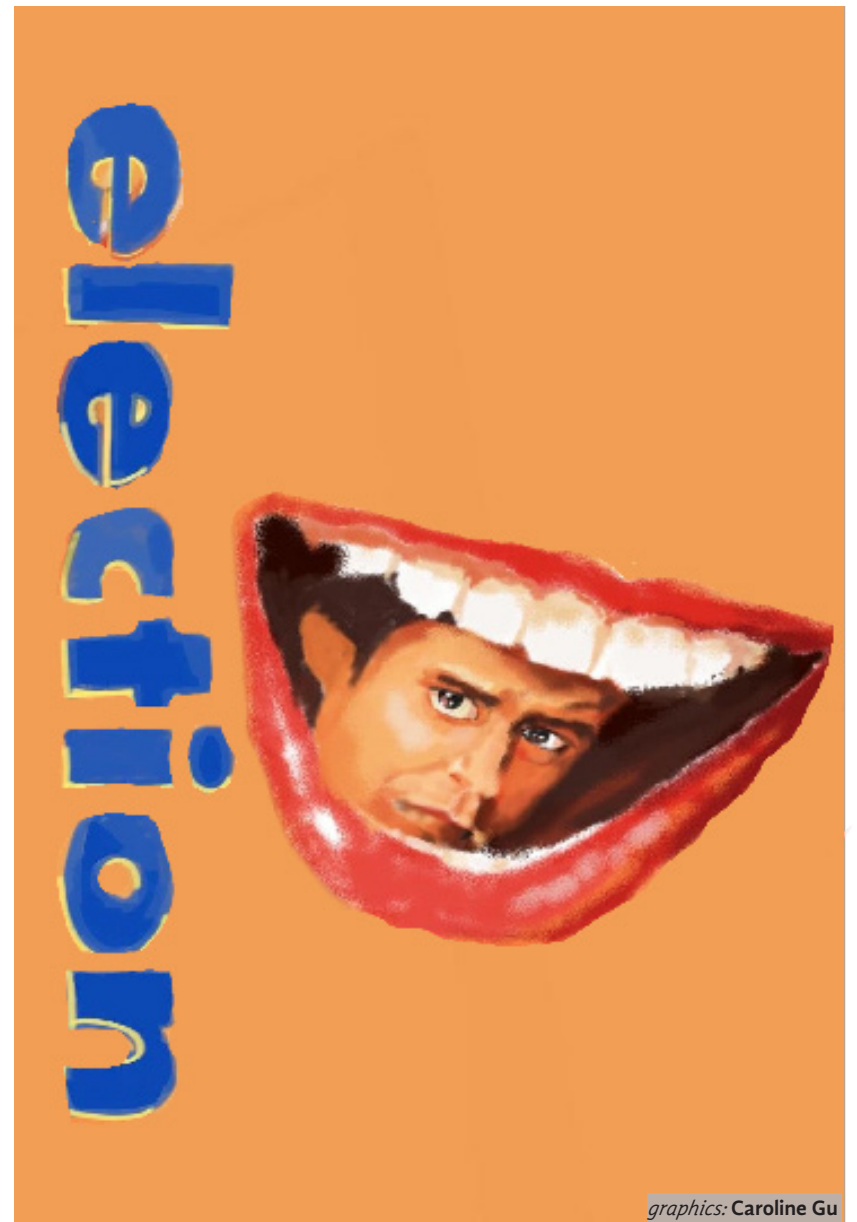
Marina Peres, STAFF WRITER

Taking place in a cozy bookstore in late autumn on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, “You’ve Got Mail” has the best setting for those moments when you feel like indulging in a jovial and comforting rom-com. This movie brings a refreshing spark of individuality to the worn-out enemies-to-lovers trope as there is an added twist: Kathleen (Meg Ryan) and Joe (Tom Hanks) may be enemies in real life, but online, an intimate relationship is blossoming. The involvement of the internet into the plot is a key ingredient in making “You’ve Got Mail” so one-of-a-kind. In the 1990s, online dating wasn’t nearly as normalized as it is nowadays, so the film was one of the first ever to add this aspect to the big screen, and modern rom-coms have now followed suit.

With frequent co-stars Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks (previously seen together in both “Sleepless in Seattle” and “Joe Versus the Volcano”), the movie was set for success right from the start. Their chemistry was as impeccable as in the other films mentioned, if not more. Even in scenes when their lines consisted of spiteful bickering, their banter flowed perfectly, making you believe they were meant to be despite the hateful words flowing out their mouths. Their relationship was as real as it gets in film.

The relationship between both main characters in real life is quite standard for rom-coms: Kathleen is a small business bookstore owner, and Joe is part of the family behind Fox Books, a chain of huge bookstores. His multi-million dollar family company now poses a threat to Kathleen, as their new store is about to run her own out of business. However, online the two mutually decided that they’d keep information of their identities entirely secret in their email relationship under fake names “Shopgirl” and “NY152.” When they start crossing paths in real life, they hate each other, but a tangled web is slowly woven through anonymity. Though Joe and Kathleen eventually work past their career conflicts as their identities are gradually revealed to each other, we still see how the situation that two people are in affects their perception of each other. When they were simply getting to know each other online, despite missing key details of the other’s identity, was when Joe and Kathleen really learned what the other was like personally. As career rivals, they simply let their situation as competitors blind them into assuming they knew everything about the other based on a few encounters. It really makes me wonder how many different people I could be closer to now, if it weren’t for the awkward positions that we have been given in each other’s lives.

“You’ve Got Mail” questions relationships in the most feel-good way possible, by demonstrating how a perfect pair can act so differently based on a different set of encounters, framing all this in the wonderful nostalgia of late-fall holidays. For bookworms and those who love fall aesthetics alike, “You’ve Got Mail” is sure to deliver! ■



graphics: Caroline Gu

“Election” film review

Luca Balescu, STAFF WRITER

In the political world, autumn doesn’t mean beautiful foliage, school beginning, or the end of summer, but rather something far more sinister: election season. In my opinion, one of the greatest movies to focus on the time-honored tradition of American democracy isn’t a historical drama or political thriller, but rather, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, a 1999 teen comedy by the name of “Election.” Although the concept may seem simplistic on the surface, the plot of “Election” is layered with commentaries on not just democracy, but also morality and ethics (the distinction between which is made clear throughout the film).

Directed by satirist Alexander Payne, “Election” follows a high school student-government election in the all-American city of Omaha, Nebraska. Specifically, the movie focuses on teacher Mr. McAllister (Matthew Broderick, bringing to mind a broken-down Ferris Bueller) who is horrified by Tracy Flick (Reese Witherspoon), the ruthlessly ambitious central figure of the film, running unopposed. McAllister persuades popular football player Paul Metzler (Chris Klein) to run against Tracy. Simultaneously, Paul’s sister Tammy (Jessica Campbell) runs on a platform to dismantle the student government.

Although this may seem straightforward, “Election” becomes a much more complex film through its exploration of character motivations and ethics. A prominent topic throughout the film is the extent to which sexual desire and frustration influences the titular election, exhibited in the character of Mr. McAllister. The root of McAllister’s antipathy towards Tracy is one of the central mysteries of the film’s plot. Although he justifies it to himself as exasperation with her ambitiousness, McAllister is well aware of a sexual relationship between Tracy and a former colleague and friend of his. This sexual undercurrent also drives Tammy’s spiteful run for president after her best friend and crush Lisa begins dating her brother following an unwanted romantic declaration by Tammy. Additionally, while Tracy runs to maintain the system and Tammy runs to dismantle it, Paul seems to be the only candidate running with a genuine interest in improving the school while in office, obviously making him the least based in reality.

“Election” also poses the question of ethics versus morality throughout the film, both hypothetically and in real-life situations, such as Tracy’s relationship with McAllister’s colleague. As the motivations and actions of the main characters become more and more questionable, we as the audience ask ourselves the same questions about ethics and morality and apply them to the characters in question.

All in all, “Election” is a lovely and funny film with a hidden complexity. As this complex web of interactions, hidden in the banal landscape of a Nebraskan high school, is revealed, it prompts thoughts about whether or not our democracy works, what prompts someone to break their morals, and what makes a good leader. ■

SPORTS

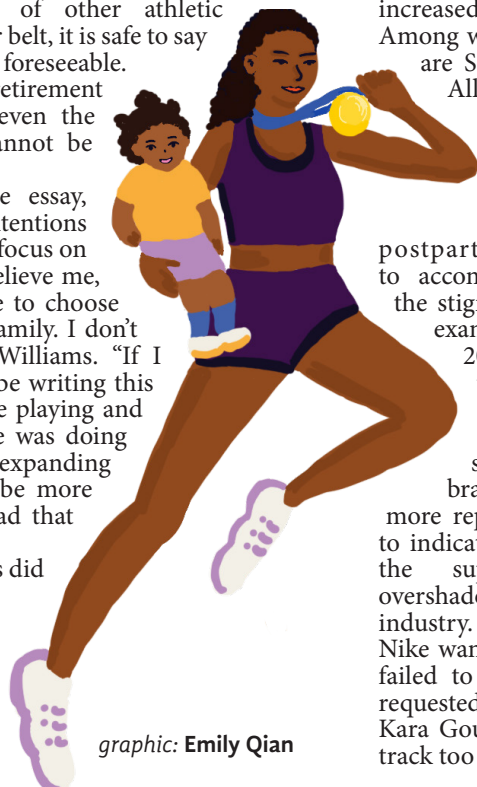
It is not enough to celebrate mothers in sports

Jessica Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

As far back as I can remember, Serena Williams has been the greatest tennis player of all time. I was always awed by the power in her shots and the poise in her presence. My respect for her grew after she quickly jumped back into tennis after having her child. Nevertheless, with 23 Grand Slam titles, four Olympic gold medals, and a slew of other athletic achievements under her belt, it is safe to say that her retirement was foreseeable. Still, as I read her retirement essay, I realized that even the greatest of all time cannot be superhuman forever.

In an August Vogue essay, Williams detailed her intentions to retire from sports to focus on growing her family. "Believe me, I never wanted to have to choose between tennis and a family. I don't think it's fair," wrote Williams. "If I were a guy, I wouldn't be writing this because I'd be out there playing and winning while my wife was doing the physical labor of expanding our family. Maybe I'd be more of a Tom Brady if I had that opportunity."

It is clear that Williams did not want to give up tennis, but realized that if she wanted to have more children, her body would not be able to handle professional tennis.



graphic: Emily Qian

For much of female sports history, women have been encouraged not to have children until after they have retired. Athletes also have other reasons for not having children. For one, having a child might bring about parental duties that comprise an athletic scholarship or sponsorship. It could also be difficult for athletes to recover quickly from the physical demands of pregnancy and child-birth, which may hinder their ability to progress in the field.

Recently, as the number of women in elite sports has increased, the amount of mothers has increased as well. Among well-known mothers in athletics

are Serena Williams, track stars Allyson Felix and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, and beach volleyball star Kerri Walsh-Jennings. Many of these athletic moms work during pregnancy or the postpartum period and are still able to accomplish great feats, challenging the stigma against pregnant athletes. For example, while pregnant, Williams won the 2017 Australian Open and Walsh-Jennings won the 2012 Olympic gold medal.

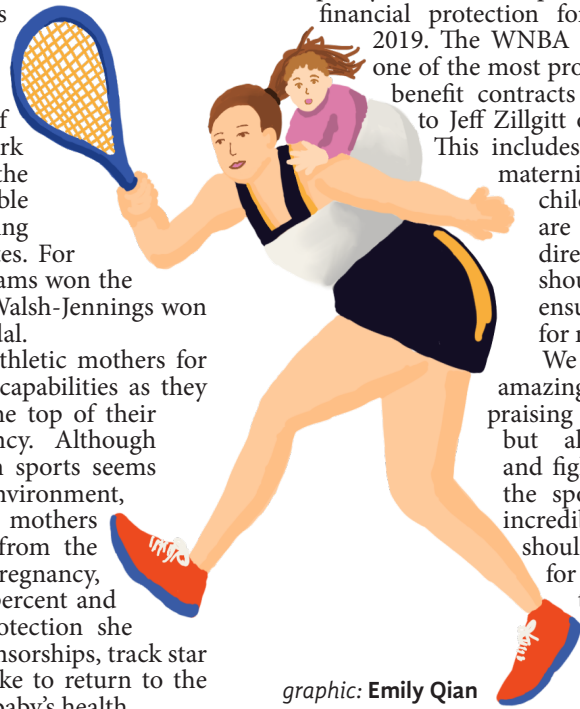
Many revere these athletic mothers for their almost superhuman capabilities as they seem to bounce back to the top of their bracket right after pregnancy. Although more representation of mothers in sports seems to indicate a more representative environment, the superhuman view of mothers overshadows their lack of support from the industry. For instance, after Felix's pregnancy, Nike wanted to cut her pay by 70 percent and failed to support the maternal protection she requested. Similarly, to keep her sponsorships, track star Kara Goucher was pressured by Nike to return to the track too soon for both her and her baby's health.

Many women in the sports industry also feel the pressure to continue playing their sport to present a strong image of themselves. They feel obligated to work well into their pregnancy and quickly return to their pre-birth bodies after childbirth. According to University of North Carolina researcher Dr. Cheryl Woods-Giscombe in 2021, this is correlated to the "Superwoman schema," the role that Black women seem to undertake as a result of historic socioeconomic pressures.

Fortunately, due to the backlash that Nike faced when Goucher and Felix publicized their maternity policy in 2019, its policy changed to increase financial protection for pregnant athletes in 2019. The WNBA followed by negotiating one of the most progressive maternity leave benefit contracts in the U.S., according to Jeff Zillgitt on USA Today in 2020.

This includes a full salary while on maternity leave and an annual child care stipend. These are all steps in the right direction, but the the public should pressure officials to ensure a safe environment for mothers in sports.

We should respect these amazing mothers not just by praising their athletic abilities but also by understanding and fighting for their rights in the sports industry. However incredible childbirth is, it should never be the reason for athletes to have to quit their job and lifelong passions. Although mothers might seem to be superhuman, they need support. ■



graphic: Emily Qian

Meet unique athletes at PHS!

Jessica Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR



photo courtesy: Zoey Shaevitz

Zoey Shaevitz '25

How long have you been doing your sport?

I first did circus in a camp nine years ago, but I've been doing it hardcore since about two years [ago].

Can you explain your sport briefly?

In a circus there are many different acts: unicycle, juggling, globe, stilts, tight wire, diablo, hooping, acrobatics, tumbling, crazy jump roping, contortion and aerials which is mostly what I do.

What encouraged you to start your sport?

I played baseball for [about] eight years but then I quit. I remembered that I did circus at a camp and I decided to try it out again. My coaches sat me down and talked to me about how I have a huge potential and that really boosted me to where I am now.

What is your goal for your sport?

I'm not sure what my end goal is with circus because I'm constantly improving and learning new skills, but for now I just want to keep getting better.

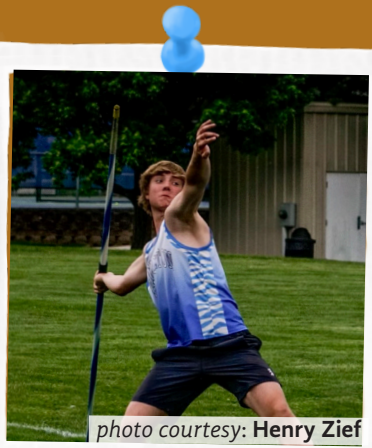


photo courtesy: Henry Zief

Henry Zief '23

How long have you been doing your sport?

I have been throwing javelin for two years now and will be going into my third year this spring.

Can you explain your sport briefly?

Javelin is one of three throwing events that are done in track [and field]. The way javelin works is that you run down a runway and then stop yourself and use the momentum you have gained and throw the javelin as far as possible.

What encouraged you to start your sport?

I was encouraged to start when I tried all the throwing events for track and found that javelin was my best event. It had similar throwing motions as baseball and football, [which] I could already throw far [in].

What is your goal for your sport?

My goal for javelin is to throw 194 feet this year and set the school record. Also, I want to be the number one javelin thrower in the state.

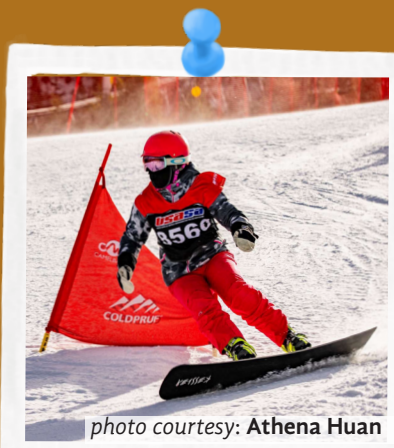


photo courtesy: Athena Huan

Athena Huan '24

How long have you been doing your sport?

I started snowboard racing when I was ten years old, so almost six years.

Can you explain your sport briefly?

It is different from traditional snowboarding. It is not about the jumps and tricks in the park, but about speed and "carving" around the gates.

What encouraged you to start your sport?

It was actually my mom who encouraged me to start this sport. I started skiing for fun when I was in kindergarten but never got really good at it. One day my mom asked me to try snowboarding because it looked cooler, so we signed up [for] a club that teaches snowboarding.

What is your goal for your sport?

I'm striving to be a national champion this year. I got second place last year and the margin between me and the champion was very small.

graphics: Emily Qian

Athletes of the Month

Jack Callahan '23: football

Wenya Huan, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Great athletes have a passion and purpose for what they do — they are focused and determined to get better every day and set goals that they actively pursue. Varsity Football Co-Captain Jack Callahan '23, shows that passion and purpose can help overcome life obstacles to achieve success.

Callahan was introduced to football through of his family. Coming from a family of football fans, he had much exposure to the sport before he started playing himself.

"I've enjoyed watching football games for a long time, [and] my dad watches football all the time," Callahan said.

With this devotion for football in mind, Callahan started playing football in eighth grade and joined the football team at PHS. Despite having little experience when he joined, Callahan knew the necessity of hard work. He put a lot of effort into training himself to become better, working on footwork and practicing catches

"Jack's a hard worker that's just committed and ready to work at practice [...] He's a quiet kid, but [based on] the amount of work he puts into playing, you could tell he's definitely passionate [about it]," said Varsity Football Co-Captain Tyler Goldberg '24.

While improving his own individual skills, Callahan learned the importance of teamwork in football games. His most memorable game was played against Bishop Eustace High School in his sophomore year. Defying many people's expectations, PHS won on a two-point conversion, which is a play a team attempts after a touchdown instead of kicking the ball.

"My teammates made that moment [the] most memorable," said Callahan. "It was just so fun being around the whole team, [everyone] got excited. We were all 100 percent zoned in on the game."

However, along with unforgettable victories, football comes with the possibilities of sustaining serious injuries. Callahan encountered his greatest obstacle last year when he broke his femur bone toward the end of the season.

"He came such a long way from that [injury]. That was like a serious injury. And I didn't really [expect] he would come back. [It] is tough because [when] you break your femur, some people will choose to just quit," Goldberg said.

But Callahan stayed in. And he came back, faster than everyone expected, focused on improving further than where he was before his injury.

"I never thought about quitting. [I overcame it] by rehabilitating my leg, going to physical therapy, and getting back with the team as soon as possible," Callahan said.

His Coach, Brandon Williams, commended Jack for his persistence in the face of his injury.

"Jack's biggest strength is his resilience. Coming into his senior year I didn't know how Jack was going to perform after coming off such a gruesome injury, but he has shown that he wouldn't let an injury hold him back. Thus far in his senior season he has been an outstanding left tackle and even better defensive end with him catching interceptions and forcing fumbles," Williams said.

Having been named team captain this year, Jack has become a role model for the younger players. He has taken full responsibility into helping them develop their skills and passion for football.

"To younger players I want to tell them to just stay passionate and focused. The time will come for them.

And they should always remember that football is fun," Callahan said.

The PHS Football Team looked forward to the Homecoming game against their old rival Bishop Eustace on September 23.

"We're very prepared. All the guys have been working hard. I really just want to win," Callahan said.

Even though Callahan is still not sure whether he will be playing professional football in the near future for college, he will always be dedicated and passionate about football.

"I never aspired to be like [any professional player] when I'm playing. I just [play] because I love the sport," Callahan said. ■



photo: Lydia Madamopoulos

Morgan Thompson '23: cheerleading

Jessica Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

The team puts their hands together. Varsity Cheerleading Co-Captain Morgan Thompson '23 starts their chant: "3...2...1... Tigers!" Exhaling a breath, she leads the team to their formations on the football field. The music begins and the crowd cheers as they passionately flip, spin, and chant.

Thompson always wanted to try cheerleading because of her background in gymnastics and Taekwondo. Nonetheless, when she first joined the team in her freshman year, she was very nervous to cheer because she was unfamiliar with the sport and the team.

"It was hard at first to pick up on the cheers and all the little things you have to pay attention to. Also, I wasn't that confident at first and it was hard for me to cheer loudly," Thompson said.

Thompson quickly overcame her nervousness by finding a group of friends on the cheer team, and with experience, she gained confidence in her abilities and started cheering louder. During her cheering career, she cycled through all the positions — flyer, the athlete who gets lifted and thrown into the air; back spot, the athlete who stands behind the stunt and supports the flyer; and baser, the athlete that holds the flyer during a stunt — and was able to successfully execute all three. Being well rounded paid off, as Thompson was named co-captain this year.

"In the last few years, Morgan blossomed, took charge, and now shows true leadership skills," said Varsity Cheerleading Head Coach Barbra Callahan. "She has gone above and beyond for everyone and truly has an amazing way of helping and being there for the girls."

As captain, Thompson organizes the various team activities, including getting ice cream after practice, having team lunch every Friday, and asking about everyone's "highs and lows" at practice.

"Team bonding is so important to cheerleading. Morgan always makes sure she includes everyone in our team bonding activities," said teammate Alex Woodbury '24.

However, balancing cheer with all her other activities has not been easy. Going to practices after school every day means that there is a lot less time to do homework and relax. In the past, Thompson felt that she lacked the motivation to be fully present at practice. However, developing a rigid routine for herself has allowed her to bring her 100 percent to every practice.

"During [cheer] season, I usually have schedules for what I want to do each day. I also wake up at seven to have more time in the morning so I can get things done and be ready. And during school, I would do my homework during lunch so then when I get home, I have a little bit more time so I can decompress," Thompson said.

In addition to cheerleading, Thompson has also has a first-degree black belt in Taekwondo and has recently also started MMA fighting. The flexibility, agility, and strength needed for these martial arts sports translates well to cheerleading.

"Morgan has all the skills to dance and stunt well, which makes her an incredible cheerleader. She gives her all to every practice, which has made her successful," Woodbury said.

Cheerleading has allowed Thompson to learn valuable lessons throughout the years. Having struggled with reaching out to others before, through cheerleading, Thompson has been able to see the significance of supporting (literally) one another.

"For cheer, you really need to have everyone supporting you or else it's going to literally fall apart. Everyone needs to be communicating and everyone needs to know what's on everyone's mind at the same time," said Thompson. "I've realized that it's okay to rely on other people to help me instead of doing [everything] myself."

For this year's homecoming, Thompson noted the hard work everyone on the team put in to stick their stunts and perfect their routines. She hoped that their hours paid off and that her last homecoming performance was her best.

"Before competition, homecoming, or pep rallies, there is this moment right before the music starts to go that we're all anticipating the final performance. Like everything that we all worked for and it's just that one breath before you just get it done. That moment is always in my head," Thompson said.

As her final cheer season at PHS winds down, Thompson wants younger cheerleaders to be their authentic selves on the mats.

"Be more out there and don't hide yourself. Try to voice your opinion more. Don't care what other girls think and just experience things for yourself," Thompson said. ■



photo: Lydia Madamopoulos



**Tico's
Eatery &
Juice Bar**



Juice Bar, Acai Bowls,
Cold Pressed Juices, Smoothies,
Green Smoothies, Quesadillas
and a Juice Truck!
(609) 252-0300
www.ticosjuicebar.com

Tico's

JUICE BAR
33 Witherspoon Street, Princeton NJ